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MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES

That Work!

This is a collaborative column by K-16 library media specialists and academic librarians who write about the motivational strategies that have worked for them in teaching IL skills.

K - 12

Strategies for Community Outreach

Reported by Kori M. Gerbig

Introduction: The K-12 strategies respond to this issue's theme of Community Outreach. What can school library media specialists do to expand resources and services beyond their student community?

Using the Book Fair and Open House to your Advantage

Every year it arrives, usually before you're ready for it. Yes, it's time again for the dreaded Book Fair, an excellent service you provide to both students and vendors, but a great deal of work for the School Library Media Specialist. Still, many of you continue to host this massive, multiple-day event, so why not use it to your outreach advantage. Usually staffed by volunteers and other individuals, the annual Book Fair can be a great time to catch up on all that paperwork you never get to. Yet if you choose to do so, you are missing out on a wonderful opportunity to meet and interact with perhaps your most important patrons – parents and caregivers. Consider making yourself visible during these events. Observe who comes and who doesn't; what they ask for, what they buy, and what they don't. These can be valuable indicators of the home reading environment and its connection to student success. Use the Book Fair not only as an opportunity for you to see, but also to be seen. Make yourself readily available to promote both the importance of information literacy and the value of services provided by the center and YOU, the library media specialist. Be prepared to inform visitors in the areas of IL standards and specific practices as you inquire about family information seeking behaviors outside the school library media center.

The Book Fair is also an excellent time to recruit caregiver volunteers. Talk to visitors (a great time is when they are in the check-out line) about their families, professions, interests, goals, and experiences, always watching for that special individual who can enhance an upcoming unit, or provide additional services to your school. Invite individuals to participate in school and library activities such as Career Day and Story-time, or to share relevant experiences, interests, hobbies, and artifacts associated with your curriculum.

Like the annual Book Fair, other school activities like Open House and Curriculum Night also provide excellent opportunities to promote your library and recruit human resources. Make arrangements for visitors to include a stop in the Media Center during tours, and have information, handouts, and/or a presentation prepared. Be sure to place volunteers outside the library and at school entrances to remind those attending to visit this most valuable resource.

Volunteers, and More Volunteers

Another popular way to reach out to your community is to recruit volunteers to assist in your library media center. Again, this is a practice that requires time and effort, but if done well – can provide invaluable opportunities, resources, and support to both you and your volunteers. Yes, you have to be selective, and yes, it does take time to match individual skills to available tasks. But if you can find time to do so, you will benefit not only from the (eventual) assistance you gain, but the invaluable relationships you will develop with community members. Like the Book Fair, working with volunteers exposes you to many and various individuals and experiences which can provide additional resources and invaluable instructional support.

When you consider starting a volunteer program, you must first think of the available pool of individuals. Consider which tasks are appropriate for volunteers and who is available to

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assist you. Don't limit yourself to parents as, although they are an excellent resource, they are not always available. In rural and urban settings you will be competing with job and daycare schedules, so it may not be an option. This was the case with one particular SLMS a K-8 setting who, perhaps out of necessity, chose to empower her students. Older ones, with good knowledge of the Dewey Decimal System assisted with circulation and re-shelving, while younger students were quickly taught how to check out their own books. It was very impressive to see children of various ages navigating the circulation system at different levels, and doing it well!

A third potential pool of volunteers to consider is your local senior citizens. Many seniors have a high level of both need and respect for the services provided by libraries, and would enjoy the opportunity to interact with younger generations. Additionally, exposing students to this ever-growing population is an excellent way to build not only compassion and empathy, but to practice communication skills with individuals outside their normal social realm. If you think this type of arrangement could work for you, begin by soliciting the assistance of student grandparents and/or visiting your local senior citizen facility.

A Second Teacher's Lounge?

When one school library media specialist was faced with decreasing urban budgets that eliminated additional library staff and left her alone to service over eight hundred K-8 students, she struggled with her personal desire to continue to collaborate with teachers on student projects. Knowing that to leave her library to facilitate relationships with teachers would require locking the door and denying access, she found a very clever and perhaps unorthodox way to bring the teachers to her. Her plan required very little effort. She obtained a used coffee maker, invested in some initial supplies, and invited all teachers to drop in anytime and help themselves to a fresh-brewed cup and browse the magazine and newspaper subscriptions conveniently located nearby. The result was a steady flow of traffic into the library throughout the day. If the SLMS was busy with a class, no problem, the coffee station was conveniently located right inside the library door where teachers could step in and out with little to no disruption. It was also located near the SLMS's office, and the circulation desk, so when not with a class the SLMS had direct access to all who entered. All that was necessary to maintain the service was a donation cup and a few minutes each day to make a fresh pot (a task easily delegated to student volunteers). Word spread quickly, and soon various pastries and other home goods began to mysteriously appear to accompany the beverage. Although the service did not draw in every teacher in the building, this SLMS was able to continue to establish and build relations without denying access to her students.

Student Interns

The task of planning the construction of a new school library can be an exciting, yet daunting one. For one particular SLMS, the task was complicated by a need to service a large community of K-12 students in a suburban private school. In this case, the SLMS reached out to the local university to recruit graduate students in the Library and Information Studies program for assistance. These students were required to complete a significant portion of their studies in practical situations, working directly in and with professional school library media specialists. As such, the relationship was one of mutual benefit. The student interns were utilized to complete the labor-intensive task of collecting information about community needs and desires via surveys, focus groups and other mediums – a task that could not have been accomplished by the SLMS alone. In doing so, the students gained practical experience in information gathering and evaluation as they developed communication and teamwork skills in a real-life environment. The obvious benefit to the SLMS was access to the created information at little to no cost to the library and/or her sanity.

COLLEGE LEVEL

Reaching Out by Locking Students In! by Abby Kasowitz-Scheer

At Syracuse University, the Library and the Office of Residence Life team up each year to plan an exciting event for undergraduate students that is both social and academic. The event, called the Library Lock-In, is held on a Friday night from 10 p.m.-2 a.m., and features a competition involving the use of the Library's print and online resources as well as games, music, food, and prizes. Since the Library is officially closed during these hours, the students are able to get to know the building in a new way that is non-threatening and fun. The collaboration between the Library and the Office of Residence Life is so successful, because each unit offers its own unique set of expertise and resources: the Library creates the research questions for the competition and arranges all of the building-level logistics; and the Office of Residence Life handles the publicity and registration, donates the food and prizes, and provides decorations. Both groups supply staff and volunteers to work the event.



The third annual Lock-In is planned for February 29, 2008. See a video of the 2007 Library Lock-In at: http://www.informationliteracy.org/content/showit/Library_Lock_In

Using Clickers to Enhance Student Engagement

Reported by Rebecca Pierce

Academic librarian and Instruction Coordinator Tony Cosgrave at Cornell University incorporates clickers in library instruction. The clickers, hand-held devices that send a radio signal to a receiver connected to the instructor's computer, allow each student to reply to questions posed by the librarian during a session. Students are more engaged in the lesson and the clickers facilitate assessment. Says Cosgrave in the S.O.S. teaching idea, "[Using Clickers to Enhance Student Engagement](#)," "the best part is that it creates noticeable excitement among the students while giving the librarian an opportunity to teach new information and check for understanding. In fact students have actually given each other high-fives after correctly answering a question."

Please share your "motivational strategies that work" with your colleagues by sending them to the editor at mparnone@syr.edu